

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Triangle Communications Whitewater FFTP Upgrade.	Proposed Implementation Date: Spring 2020
Proponent: Triangle Communications, PO Box 1140, Havre, MT 59501	
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to install an underground telecommunications cable within a right-of-way 20' wide (10' on either side of a centerline) across School Trust land in Phillips County. This line will be "knifed in" (entrenched using machinery that requires very little digging, usually a line about 12" wide at most). The line will allow for improved telecommunication capabilities in this rural area and the surrounding communities.	
Location: W2SW4 of Sec. 10, Twp. 34N, Rge. 29E N2N2 of Sec 15, Twp. 37N, Rge. 32E SW4SW4 of Sec. 16, Twp. 35N, Rge. 29E NW4NE4, E2NE4 of Sec. 36, Twp. 35N, Rge. 32E SW4NW4, SW4 of Sec. 16, Twp. 34N, Rge. 34E E2NE4 of Sec. 21, Twp. 37N, Rge. 32E W2NW4 of Sec. 16, Twp. 34N, Rge. 29E	County: Phillips

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	The Right-of-Way application from Triangle was received by the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO) and reviewed by GUO staff. Triangle staff was contacted to discuss the easement application during processing.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project as it pertains to School Trust lands. Montana DNRC, Real Estate Management Bureau has jurisdiction over the project.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Action Alternative: Grant permission to Triangle Communications to install the telecommunications line on School Trust land. No Action Alternative: Deny permission to Triangle Communications to install the telecommunications line on School

	Trust land.
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II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>The area of impact consists of the following soil types/complexes: Scobey-Phillips complex, Kevin-Scobey-Phillips association, Scobey-Kevin clay loams, Hilton-Cabbart loams, Hilton-Kevin clay loams, Phillips-Kevin complex, Phillips loams and Theony-Elloam-Absher complex, with 0-60% slopes. Some areas with a steeper slope are generally more susceptible to runoff erosion. No unusual geologic features are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There will be temporary soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground. This disturbance is relatively shallow and does not remove/displace any soil. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to soils on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. There is no potential for impact on drinking water in the area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?

This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. A short-term increase in vehicle traffic will result in a slight increase in dust. No pollutants will be produced.

Action Alternative: This type of project on the School Trust land will have minimal impact to the air quality. Some dust may occur due to vehicle use.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to air quality.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?

The acreage within the area of impact consists of native grasses and various forbs, as well as farmland seeded annually or semi-annually with small grains and pulse crops. The area of impact is managed for livestock grazing and agricultural production. No rare plants or cover types are present.

Action Alternative: The telecommunications line would have no impact on the vegetative community due to the knifing process used to install the line.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plant communities on the School Trust land.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?

The School Trust land provides habitat for antelope, upland birds, songbirds and deer. There is fair potential for recreation on these tracts due to ease of access from adjacent county roads.

Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line will be small and will be mitigated quickly with the return to normal grazing/management practices.

No Action Alternative: Under this

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>alternative there will be no impacts to the possible use of the School Trust land as wildlife habitat.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>This project is within General Greater Sage-Grouse habitat as outlined by the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT). Triangle submitted the project to MSGOT for review prior to submitting the application, and received approval, along with guidelines to follow, back from MSGOT.</p> <p>No wetlands are within the area of impact. The following species of concern are listed as being at least seasonally present within the area of impact: Brewer's Sparrow, McCown's Longspur, Long-billed Curlew, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Sprague's Pipit, Ferruginous Hawk, Baird's Sparrow, Swift Fox, Burrowing Owl, Greater Sage-Grouse, Bobolink, Loggerhead Shrike, Great Blue Heron, Greater Short-horned Lizard.</p> <p>Action Alternative: By following the recommendations made by MSGOT, impacts to sage-grouse will be mitigated during and after the installation process. Any other impacts due to installation of the line will be small and will be mitigated quickly with the return to normal grazing/management practices.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the environmental resources.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>A class 3 cultural resource survey was carried out by Ethnoscience, Inc. of Billings, MT under contract of Triangle. The results of this survey were shared with DNRC and reviewed by Patrick Rennie, archaeologist.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project will have no impact on historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.</p>

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	<p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>The proposed project is directly adjacent to several county roads, so the project will be readily visible to the public. The project is in a relatively sparsely-populated area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: An underground line in this area will not alter the aesthetics at all. After installation, there will be no visible impacts.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics associated with the School Trust land.</p>
<p>12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>Environmental resources in the area are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities will affect the project.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project will place no additional demands on any environmental resources in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>There are currently no other studies, plans or projects on these tracts.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This project will not impact any other plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts</p>

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III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE

POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?

The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent risks that are not impacted by access across the School Trust land.

Action Alternative: The installation of the cable would slightly increase the risk of fire during the project due to increased vehicle traffic.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to human health or safety.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?

The area of impact is classified as grazing acreage or agricultural acreage and is managed for livestock grazing or production of small grains and/or pulse crops.

Action Alternative: Any short-term disturbance to vegetation on the tract would be too small to have a measurable economic impact on the agricultural activities on this tract.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to agricultural activities on the School Trust land.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.

Action Alternative: The project will not create nor impact any jobs in the area.

No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.

<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will increase vehicle traffic in the area during installation. There would be no additional demand for governmental services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no additional demand for government services.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust land. It is managed for typical agricultural activities (livestock grazing and crop production).</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project has cleared State (DNRC) management plans.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>These tracts are accessible from adjacent county roads, and this project would have no impact on that access.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential will occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the recreational values associated with the School Trust land under this alternative.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>

	No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	<p>Action Alternative: The project will enhance telecommunications capabilities for residents in the surrounding area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	<p>This telecommunications project is intended to provide greater telecommunication capabilities in the surrounding area/communities. This is a very rural area with limited capabilities currently.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the cable across School Trust land would have little economic impact to the School Trust but would provide surrounding communities with increased telecommunications capabilities.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social and economic circumstances under this alternative.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Jack Medlicott Date: 3/25/2020
Jack Medlicott Land Use Specialist

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts expected.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

s/Matthew Poole\s Date: April 3, 2020
Signature